

## State Quality Improvement Team

Dear State QIC Members:

Studies have shown that youth who transition from foster care to independent living face hardships and difficulties as adults. Typically, they have less education, lower paying jobs, higher crime rates, higher medical needs, higher pregnancy rates, and proportionately score in the lower ranges of most socio-economic indicators (Fagnoni, 1999).

A study of the Las Vegas Nevada foster care ILP program identified demographics such as age, race, gender, income, education and employment. The results were alarming as most of these types of studies are: 31% graduated high school, 30% had attended some college, 60% had an income less than \$10,000 annually, with 10% having no income at all, 30% complained of serious medical problems, 25% were on Medicaid, and only 9% had private insurance. (Reilly, 2003). We don't believe that this is exclusive to foster children in Nevada, but that this is a trend Nationally.

The Washington County Division of Child & Family Services has implemented a pilot program working with the Transition to Adult living Program (TAL). We are excited to monitor this and observe the success it might bring to the youth in our system. However, we are concerned that once the children are 18 or age out of the system, they will still struggle to succeed financially, emotionally, spiritually, physically and intellectually. However, due to our concern for children in foster care who age out of the system, we would like to see a program implemented to support these youth beyond what the State can do for them. In order to do this, we would like to offer each youth a peer mentor. This peer mentor would need to attend appropriate pre-license foster parent classes and have a background check completed.

Everyone deserves to have someone to call to brag about their successes, vent their frustrations, share their dreams and to reach out to when things seem to be falling apart around them. Although ideally this person would be a healthy mom or dad, we believe that a peer mentor would be the next best thing since this is not available to them. If these young adults have a consistent peer mentor to reach out to and ask advice and use as a resource when they don't know where to turn, we believe these disheartening statistics would improve tremendously.

We propose that a monthly stipend of a minimum of \$50 be offered to the peer mentors who are willing to participate. In return for the stipend, the following would be required of the peer mentors:

1. Attend one session of the TAL Classes so that they are aware of what is being taught.
2. Visit the Young Adult in their residence a minimum of two times a month
3. Contact the Young Adult by phone a minimum of once a week.

Research has also shown that if the youth do not have a reason to participate in a program such as this, they will not cooperate. Therefore, we would also like to request that funding be provided to offer them a stipend as well. We would like to request a stipend of \$25/month for them. In return for the stipend, the young adult would be required to cooperate and be available for the peer mentors.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Chantel Markel, Chair  
Washington County QIC